

Chinese Music: A Comprehensive Curricular Unit for Seventh Graders

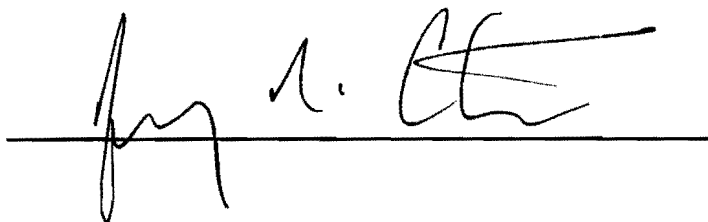
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

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Abstract

This is a comprehensive unit on Chinese music, covering history and culture, music theory, common instruments, and Peking opera. It includes lesson plans, video and audio examples, as well as reproducible assessments. Due to the Social Studies curriculum in the state of Indiana, this unit is directed at seventh graders, but could easily be adapted to fit the needs of students in higher or lower grades.

Analysis and Commentary

I decided to write this unit after touring China with the University Singers. As ambassadors, we were treated to several cultural exchanges by local students. These exchanges included not only dance and other unique Chinese art forms, but also music. Students performed on native instruments, demonstrated Chinese styles of singing, and presented Peking Opera.

I had never seen or heard many of these instruments and styles. As the visit went on, I became increasingly aware of a gap in American music education. This gap is the one that allows students to become incredibly familiar with European styles of music and marginally familiar with African styles, but leaves those same students completely ignorant of Asian styles and traditions.

As a music education major, I decided that I could fix this gap. I originally chose to focus this unit on eighth graders, due to the complexity of some of the subjects, but decided to change to seventh graders after student teaching with this age group and learning that the seventh grade social studies curriculum includes a study of nations such as China.

My next step was to thoroughly research Chinese music. This proved to me more difficult than I originally thought, as resources were in short supply. Of the books in the Ball State library, the most recent one was published in 1985, with the majority of the meager supply having been published in the 1960's or before. This is an important detail, since music will have changed with the opening of China to the West, and the lessening of communistic holds on the people and culture.

This informational incongruity only strengthened my resolve to fill the gap. I supplemented my research with information culled from reputable internet sites as well as books bought during our tour of China. I was forced to direct my study to "traditional" Chinese music, but since this is what makes Chinese music unique, I was fine with this.

Once my research was complete, I needed to divide my unit into smaller sections and decide what was the most important to teach to seventh graders. Since they would ideally have received instruction in general Chinese culture and traditions, I was able to eliminate that section and focus on traditions specific to the arts. I then divided the remaining sections into the ones that can be found in the completed unit.

Lessons for each section were determined by the aspects of music that I had read about over and over. For example, in the Theory section, I repeatedly read about the Chinese use of folk tunes in contemporary arrangements. This therefore became something important to include. I left out some things that would be too advanced for the average seventh grader, such as the traditional system of notation.

I also had to determine age-appropriate activities. Seventh graders are a unique group, in that they are advanced enough to understand some complicated topics, but have

short attention spans. I combined these traits with the national standards for music education and was able to come up with several interactive activities that not only taught Chinese music and kept the students involved, but also reinforced basic musical concepts. I was able to test the integrity of a few of these lessons by teaching them to my students at Batesville Middle School.

I enlisted the help of friends to complete the multimedia portion of this unit. I used video taken from our tour of China to illustrate opera and instrument examples. A friend with a telecommunications major was able to create a DVD with these clips. Musical examples were put on to an audio CD by another friend with a CD burner. Without these examples the unit would have been far less effective.

Although this is a comprehensive unit, much is left up to the teacher. The lesson plans are simple outlines, and there are plenty of places for the teacher to elaborate on or pare down the lesson. I chose to do this because each class of students is unique. The teacher will be familiar with his or her students and will know what is appropriate for each individual class.

Although this is only one small unit, working on it has instilled in me a desire to change the music curriculum. Although “diversity” is a word that is thrown around easily, I believe that it is much more difficult to actually achieve. Combining all world music into a one-week study does not achieve this goal, nor is it fair to the cultures from which the music comes. It is my hope that this unit makes a small step toward achieving the diversity goal.

Chinese Music: A Comprehensive Curricular Unit for Seventh Graders

Rationale

This unit was created because non-western music is grossly underrepresented in the public schools. By learning about music from cultures other than their own, students learn to become more open-minded and welcoming to differences. In comparing student experiences with familiar music to their experiences with unfamiliar music, students learn to think critically.

This unit corresponds with the Indiana state curriculum for seventh graders, which includes a study of World Geography. It is intended that the unit be taught at the same time that the students are learning about China and other Asian cultures, in order for cross curricular goals to be met. This concurrent teaching will also serve to improve student understanding in both social studies and music.

This unit meets most National Standards for Music Education. Portions of this unit were taught to seventh grade students at Batesville Middle School in Batesville, IN.

Objectives

By the end of this unit, the student will:

- Have an increased understanding and awareness of Chinese music.
- Be able to compare and contrast defining features of Chinese music with the defining features of Western music.
- Correctly identify common Chinese instruments.
- Be able to compare and contrast Chinese opera with Western opera.
- Understand how culture affects music.

The National Standards for Music Education, grades 5-8, as established by the National Association for Music Education

(Taken from <http://www.menc.org/publication/books/prek12st.html>)

1. Content Standard: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. sing accurately and with good breath control throughout their singing ranges, alone and in small and large ensembles
- b. sing with expression and technical accuracy a repertoire of vocal literature with a level of difficulty of 2, on a scale of 1 to 6, including some songs performed from memory
- c. sing music representing diverse genres and cultures, with expression appropriate for the work being performed
- d. sing music written in two and three parts

2. Content Standard: Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music

Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. perform on at least one instrument accurately and independently, alone and in small and large ensembles, with good posture, good playing position, and good breath, bow, or stick control
- b. perform with expression and technical accuracy on at least one string, wind, percussion, or classroom instrument a repertoire of instrumental literature with a level of difficulty of 2, on a scale of 1 to 6
- c. perform music representing diverse genres and cultures, with expression appropriate for the work being performed
- d. play by ear simple melodies on a melodic instrument and simple accompaniments on a harmonic instrument

3. Content Standard: Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments

Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. improvise simple harmonic accompaniments
- b. improvise melodic embellishments and simple rhythmic and melodic variations on given pentatonic melodies and melodies in major keys
- c. improvise short melodies, unaccompanied and over given rhythmic accompaniments, each in a consistent style, meter, and tonality

4. Content Standard: Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. compose short pieces within specified guidelines, demonstrating how the elements of music are used to achieve unity and variety, tension and release, and balance
- b. arrange simple pieces for voices or instruments other than those for which the pieces were written
- c. use a variety of traditional and nontraditional sound sources and electronic media when composing and arranging

5. Content Standard: Reading and notating music

Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. read whole, half, quarter, eighth, sixteenth, and dotted notes and rests in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/8, 3/8, and alla breve meter signatures
- b. read at sight simple melodies in both the treble and bass clefs
- c. identify and define standard notation symbols for pitch, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, articulation, and expression
- d. use standard notation to record their musical ideas and the musical ideas of others

6. Content Standard: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. describe specific music events in a given aural example, using appropriate terminology
- b. analyze the uses of elements of music in aural examples representing diverse genres and cultures
- c. demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles of meter, rhythm, tonality, intervals, chords, and harmonic progressions in their analyses of music

7. Content Standard: Evaluating music and music performances

Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. develop criteria for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of music performances and compositions and apply the criteria in their personal listening and performing
- b. evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their own and others' performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations by applying

specific criteria appropriate for the style of the music and offer constructive suggestions for improvement

8. Content Standard: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. compare in two or more arts how the characteristic materials of each art can be used to transform similar events, scenes, emotions, or ideas into works of art
- b. describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with those of music

9. Content Standard: Understanding music in relation to history and culture

Achievement Standard:

Students

- a. describe distinguishing characteristics of representative music genres and styles from a variety of cultures
- b. classify by genre and style (and, if applicable, by historical period, composer, and title) a varied body of exemplary (that is, high-quality and characteristic) musical works and explain the characteristics that cause each work to be considered exemplary
- c. compare, in several cultures of the world, functions music serves, roles of musicians, and conditions under which music is typically performed

Lesson Plans

Introduction to Chinese Musical Culture

Since the students will be studying Chinese history and culture in their social studies classes, an in-depth look at this topic will not be necessary in the music classroom. However, there are customs and traditions related to the arts that should be understood by the students before continuing with the unit. These are topics that will likely not be discussed in the social studies classroom.

Objectives:

- The student will participate in a discussion on Chinese music.
- The student will compare and contrast American music with Chinese music to teacher satisfaction.

Materials:

Chalkboard or whiteboard with writing utensil

Lesson Outline:

- Begin class by asking students what they know about Chinese music; write these ideas on the board
- Discuss as a class which ideas are correct, which are incorrect, and which are unknown.
- At this point, go over the facts that are included in the “History and Culture” section in the Teacher’s Guide. Compare some of these traditions to American traditions we have.

Standards Addressed:

- 9. *Understanding music in relation to history and culture*
 - c. compare, in several cultures of the world, functions music serves, roles of musicians, and conditions under which music is typically performed

Folk Song Arrangement- Theme and Variations

In China, “new” songs are often an arrangement of old folk songs. It is not uncommon in traditional music for a piece to be played on a concert, then replayed later with different instrumentation as a different piece.

Objectives:

- The student will play the melody of “Flower Drum Song” with 95% accuracy.
- Given guidelines, the student will compose at least two (2) variations on “Flower Drum Song, to teacher satisfaction.
- After listening to selected student compositions, the student will accurately identify the compositional techniques used.

Materials:

- Orff instruments (or individual keyboards)
- Words to “Flower Drum Song”

Lesson Outline:

- Teach students to play the melody of “Flower Drum Song”, using the rote technique
- Point out to students the use of the pentatonic scale in this melody
 - If this is not review, use this as a separate lesson on the pentatonic scale and its’ prominence in Asian music.
- Hand out copies
- Brainstorm as a class for possible ways to alter a melody
- Allow students time to create at least two variations on the melody, using the discussed techniques
- Take volunteers to play their compositions for the class
- Students evaluate the compositions for techniques used
- Students fill out the self assessment form for this project

Adjustments for advanced classes:

- Students learn the tune from written music, rather than by rote
- Students write out their compositions, using either traditional notation or creative notation
- In order to complete this variation, staff paper or plain paper, as well as writing utensils, will be needed.

Standards Addressed:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
 - a. sing accurately and with good breath control throughout their singing ranges, alone and in small and large ensembles
 - c. sing music representing diverse genres and cultures, with expression appropriate for the work being performed
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
 - a. perform on at least one instrument / accurately and independently,

alone and in small and large ensembles, with good posture, good playing position, and good breath, bow, or stick control

c. perform music representing diverse genres and cultures, with expression appropriate for the work being performed

d. play by ear simple melodies on a melodic instrument and simple accompaniments on a harmonic instrument

4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines

a. compose short pieces within specified guidelines, demonstrating how the elements of music are used to achieve unity and variety, tension and release, and balance

7. Evaluating music and music performances

b. evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their own and others' performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations by applying specific criteria appropriate for the style of the music and offer constructive suggestions for improvement

The adaptation for advanced students will also address:

5. Reading and notating music

d. use standard notation to record their musical ideas and the musical ideas of others

Melody in Chinese Music

In Chinese music, melody takes precedence over every other musical element.

Objectives:

- The student will evaluate recordings for the use of melody in Chinese music.
- The student will compare and contrast Chinese and Western music as related to melody.

Materials:

- Recordings of Chinese traditional music (variety of instruments and ensembles)
- Recordings of Western music (variety of instruments and ensembles)

Lesson Outline:

- Play examples of both Chinese and western music.
- As a class, discuss distinguishing characteristics of each piece.
- Ask students what they think the focus of the compositions is in each type of music.
- Discuss the Chinese focus on melody vs. the western focus on harmony and rhythm.

Standards Addressed:

- 6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
 - a. describe specific music events in a given aural example, using appropriate terminology
 - b. analyze the uses of elements of music in aural examples representing diverse genres and cultures
 - c. demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles of meter, rhythm, tonality, intervals, chords, and harmonic progressions in their analyses of music
- 9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture
 - a. describe distinguishing characteristics of representative music genres and styles from a variety of cultures

Chinese Instruments Lesson

Instruments used in Chinese music are very different from those used in Western music, but often have similar characteristics.

This lesson should require more than one class period.

Objectives:

The student will correctly identify instruments used in Chinese music.

The student will accurately compare and contrast Western and Chinese instruments.

Materials:

“Chinese Instruments” Powerpoint

Audio CD

Video DVD

Instruments worksheet

Lesson Outline:

- Show powerpoint presentation, inserting video and audio examples where appropriate. Supplement presentation with information found in the “Instruments” section of the Teacher’s Guide.
- Hand out worksheet. This can be used as classwork or homework depending on time constraints.

Standards Addressed:

9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture

a. describe distinguishing characteristics of representative music genres and styles from a variety of cultures

Going Further:

Many major Symphony Orchestras have collections of ethnic instruments that can be borrowed by school music programs. Check with your local symphony’s education division to see if this is an option.

Chinese Opera

Beijing (or Peking) Opera is a very distinctive art form in China.

Objectives:

- The student will correctly distinguish between the two types of Peking Opera.
- The student will correctly identify distinctive characteristics of Peking Opera.

Materials:

Video DVD

Lesson Outline:

- Show students clip of student singing in Chinese style
- Discuss how this is different from Western style singing
- Explain that this style is used in Peking opera
- Show clip from "Farewell My Concubine"
- Discuss the different timbres used by the actors. Chinese opera assigns vocal parts by role, not vocal range.
- Show clip from "Monkey King". Compare this style to the style of "FMC".
- Explain Wen Chang (singing) opera vs. Wu Chang (martial) opera. (see notes in "Opera" section of Teacher's guide)
- Discuss the difference in instrumental accompaniment between the two styles
- Show clip of "FMC"
- Have the students discuss what they see with regards to costuming and scenery.
- Discuss how this is different from Western plays or operas they have seen.

Assign webquest to students. Have them present their reports to the class.

Standards Addressed:

6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
 - a. describe specific music events in a given aural example, using appropriate terminology
 - b. analyze the uses of elements of music in aural examples representing diverse genres and cultures
 - c. demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles of meter, rhythm, tonality, intervals, chords, and harmonic progressions in their analyses of music

Reproducible Assessments

Self Assessment for Theme and Variations

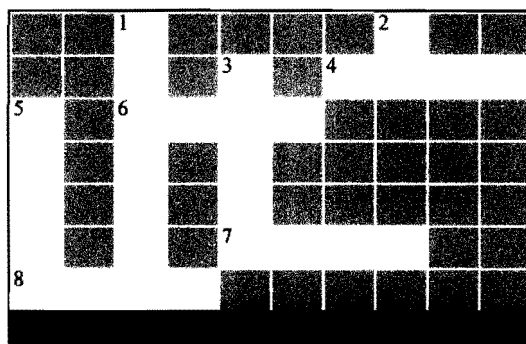
Name _____ Period _____

1. How many variations did you create?
2. What different techniques did you use for these variations?
3. How did these techniques alter the melody?
4. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being "I would perform this for all my friends" and 10 being "I wouldn't even let my dog eat it", how would you rate your composition?
5. Why?
6. If you could do this again, how would you change your composition?

Chinese Instruments Crossword

Name _____

Period _____



ACROSS

DOWN

- | | |
|---|---|
| 4. Pear-shaped lute | 1. "Moon Lute" |
| 6. Two stringed bowed instrument | 2. Wooden flute |
| 7. Double reed used in ensembles with the Sheng | 3. 21-25 strings, played with the fingers |
| 8. Large bronze plate | 5. Mouth organ |

Word Bank

Di
Erhu

Gong
Guan

Pipa
Sheng

Yuequin
Zheng

Chinese Music Test

Name _____ Period _____

1. Name two functions of Chinese music.
2. What musical element is emphasized in Chinese music?
3. What scale is used in Chinese music?
4. What are the two types of opera?
5. What do traditional Chinese composers use as inspiration for their music?
6. What is the difference in the stage set-up between Western opera and Beijing opera?

Webquest



Introduction

The local symphony orchestra is partnering with the Opera company to present a concert of Chinese Opera. When preparing the program, the conductor realized that he didn't know anything about traditional Chinese opera. Since he knows that you have experience with Chinese music, he has asked you to step in and help him out.

Task

Using the resources below, research one aspect of Beijing Opera. The maestro needs to know about these topics:

- The history of the opera
- Costuming and symbolism
- Vocal techniques
- Instruments used
- Stage set up and symbolism
- Sample Operas and plots

Choose one of these topics and write a 1-2 page report. The maestro is a visual learner, so include pictures. He also wants anything he receives to be typed and double spaced.

Resources

<http://www.chinapage.com/beijing-opera.html>

This site includes links to informative sites, as well as sound clips of performers.

<http://www.chinapages.com/culture/jje.htm>

A very informative site with links to all aspects of the opera.

<http://www.geocities.com/Vienna/Opera/8692/index0.html>

Good for researching plotlines

http://www.travelchinaguide.com/intro/arts/beijing_opera/index.htm

This site provides an overview of opera traditions.

www.google.com is also a great resource. Remember that Chinese opera is also referred to as Beijing opera and Peking opera.



Rubric

	0	1	2	3
Topical Information	No Information	Minimal Information	Information is included, but does not go into much detail	Information is included and thorough
Pictures	No pictures are included	Pictures are included, but are not relevant	Relevant pictures are included	
Presentation	10 or more grammar or spelling mistakes	9-5 grammar or spelling mistakes	4-1 grammar or spelling mistakes	No grammar or spelling mistakes
Directions followed			Paper is typed and double-spaced according to directions	

Teacher's Guide

to

Chinese Music

I. History and Culture

Music in China can be traced as far back as the country itself. Mention of Chinese music as we know it today can be found in the records of Emperor Huang Ti, who ruled in BC 2697. This music, however, has changed considerably throughout the years. This is due in no small part to the influence of other cultures. China is a country made up of minorities, and these minorities have helped to shape and influence the music.

Music is also very important to the Chinese people. There is an official office of music within the Chinese government, and many state-sponsored conservatories. These schools teach traditional Chinese music alongside Western music. Music is also taught to schoolchildren.

In China, music serves many functions. It is used for entertainment, in the form of everything from street musicians to formal concerts and performances. It is also used for ritual and worship purposes, in places such as the Buddhist and Confucian temples. In this way Chinese music is no different from Western music, which is used for the same purposes. Musicians practice their art not only to become good at it, but also to enjoy themselves.

Music has not always been seen in such a favorable light, however. The philosopher Lao Tzu believed that the making of music was not a natural process and so should be avoided. This disdainful view of music was shared by Mo Tzu, who believed that music was wasteful and unproductive. The great philosopher Confucius held a different view. While he frowned upon music that expressed human desires and feelings, he believed that religious music was beautiful and proper.

II. Theory

Chinese music theory differs from Western music theory in many ways. One of the most obvious aural differences is the use of the pentatonic scale. The pentaton is used liberally in Chinese music. In traditional Chinese music, proper major and minor scales do not exist. The five tones of the pentaton correlate with the five seasons (including center), the five directions (including center), and the five material elements. For this reason, the pentaton is important in traditional Chinese music.

Another distinctive element of Chinese music is the focus on melody. Western music often focuses on elements such as rhythm and harmony. This gives the music drive. In contrast, Chinese music emphasizes the melodic line. Much traditional music is actually in unison, so that harmony is excluded completely.

Chinese music is often passed down without the aid of written notation. When the music is written down, it often excludes elements that Western music considers crucial. For example, traditional Chinese notation lacks style and dynamic markings, as well as any indication of tempo or meter. The music is often written without noting the duration of the notes. It is possible to notate rests, but this is not always done. As a result of this, or perhaps because of it, individual performances of the same tune always vary greatly. It is left up to the performer to determine the way that the notes should be played.

While Western music is often composed to convey an emotion or a musical idea, Chinese music is frequently composed to describe a scene. This kind of programmatic music is made more possible by the fact that the instruments were originally created to mimic the sounds of nature. This is in contrast to the instruments in Western music, which often strive to imitate the sound of the human voice.

Many arrangements in Chinese music are simply rearrangements of folk tunes or other familiar songs. In Chinese music, timbre is very important. As a result of this, a tune can be played by another instrument and still be regarded as a completely different piece. This philosophy of rearrangement is also made possible by the freedom the player has with regard to style and tempo.

Because China is such a large country, music has developed differently in different parts of the country. The most obvious distinction is between North and South China, but distinctions also exist between city and country music, as well as music in individual cities. An example of this is the difference between the Beijing and Shanghai schools of Peking Opera. North and South China see a difference in the types of ensembles that are popular, as well as how certain instruments are made.

Modern Chinese music theory has been heavily influenced by Western culture. This influx began in the 1920's, with the creation of a conservatory in Shanghai. Today Western music is taught alongside Chinese music in the conservatories, and courses in Chinese music are modeled off of their Western counterparts. Students can major in traditional instruments and techniques as well as Western instruments and techniques.

III. Instruments

This category is not exhaustive. Since there are many different instruments used in Chinese traditional music, a representative sample has been chosen.

i. Gongs

A gong is a round instrument made of a special resonant alloy of copper and tin. This material is hammered into shape, with shoulders that are turned back at a 90 degree

angle. This instrument is suspended from a frame and struck in the center with a hard beater. Gongs can vary in size from 6cm to several feet in diameter.

While gongs used for ritual and instrumental purposes are mostly flat, gongs used in the opera have a convex shape. When these gongs are struck, their pitch changes. Whether the pitch moves up or down is dependent on the size of the instrument. A gong with a 22cm diameter or less will have an ascending pitch, while a gong with a larger diameter will have a descending pitch.

ii. Erhu

The *erhu* is a stringed instrument that is played with a bow. It consists of two strings attached to a wood and snakeskin resonator. The neck is long and contains no frets, but it does have two tuning pegs at the top. The instrument is normally played sitting, with the resonator resting on the leg and the neck pointing straight up. The right hand holds the bow while the left hand touches the strings to adjust the pitches. In contrast to its Western counterpart, the violin, the *erhu* is played with the bow between the strings.

iii. Pipa

The *pipa* is a pear shaped wooden instrument with four strings. It has 30 frets, which give it an unusually large range. It is used in ensemble music as well as solo playing, and can achieve many different sound effects, making it a very versatile instrument. It is very similar in construction, sound, and playing technique to the western lute, although the *pipa* is played with the neck pointing up.

iv. Yuequin

The *Yuequin*, or Moon Lute, is a four stringed instrument with a long neck and a round body. The four strings are tuned in pairs a fifth apart. This instrument is plucked with the fingers and is used to accompany vocalists. It is especially prominent in the music of Peking Opera.

v. Zheng

The *zheng* is one of the oldest Chinese instruments. It consists of a wooden body with moveable bridges and 21-25 strings. Today these strings are made of metal or nylon, but in the past they were made of silk. It is traditionally tuned using the pentatonic scale. The *zheng* is played by plucking the strings with the right hand, and using the left hand to create pitch alterations, vibrato, and other effects.

vi. Sheng

The *sheng*, or mouth organ, consists of 13-17 bamboo pipes that are arranged around a wooden resonator. A metal pipe is used as a mouthpiece. The player produces notes by blowing into the mouthpiece and covering holes at the base of the pipes. This instrument is unique in that it can produce more than one note at a time. It is used in orchestral as well as solo playing.

vii. Di

The *di*, also known as a *dizi*, is a bamboo transverse flute. Traditionally, this flute has no keys, only six finger holes. In order to play in different keys the performer might have several different flutes. The performer plays accidentals by partially covering one or more of the tone holes. Modern *di* are produced with keys to aid in playing accidentals.

A distinctive characteristic of this flute is one hole that is covered with rice paper to produce a slight buzzing sound.

vii. Guan

The *guan* is very similar in sound to the oboe. It is made of wood or bamboo and has a reed mouthpiece. The soprano version has no keys, but the alto and bass versions do have keys. This instrument is used in all sorts of ensembles, but is often found in concert with the *sheng*.

IV. Peking Opera

Peking Opera (also known as Beijing Opera) is a style of opera that is unique to China. It has several features that distinguish it from the more familiar European style opera. These features include a distinctive vocal technique, traditional makeup and costume styles, sparse yet symbolic stage decoration, and time-honored plots.

i. History

Peking Opera as we know it today came into being in 1790, when opera troupes from all over the country came to Beijing to celebrate the birthday of Emperor Qianlong. These troupes combined elements from several different opera styles to achieve Peking Opera. After refining and popularizing this particular style, troupes began to tour the country. This served to make the genre even more well-known in China. In 1867 Peking Opera reached Shanghai. Shanghai adopted Peking Opera, but also developed some unique characteristics, creating a distinctive “Shanghai School” of Peking Opera. Today, Peking Opera is the premier opera style performed in China.

ii. Character Types

There are four basic types of characters in Peking Opera: *Sheng*, *Dan*, *Jing*, and *Chou*. A *Sheng* role is any kind of grown up male. This includes young and old men as well as men with martial skills. Unlike Western opera, young male roles have traditionally been unimportant. *Dan* is the name for any female role. Until this century, these roles were played by men with feminine characteristics. This role can also be divided into young, old, and martial. The *Jing* role is the “painted face” role. It is these characters that paint their faces with the elaborate makeup and patterns usually associated with Peking Opera. *Jing* characters are always male and are rough and bold. This role is further divided, like the others, into singing types and martial types. The fourth and final role is the *Chou* role. This role is the broadest, and can include all types of characters. *Chou* characters serve as foils to the leading character in the opera, and are humorous in nature. Although performers initially learn the basics of all roles, they eventually commit themselves to one type of role.

iii. Vocal Style

Peking opera singers use a distinctive falsetto nasal tone when singing. Performers often do not look like they are opening their mouths enough to produce a sound. This is due to the sound resonating more in the head than in the throat and mouth. Not all characters use this distinctive sound. *Jing* characters use a rougher, more Western sound. *Dan* and *Sheng* roles use this nasal tone, but each role varies in style. In *Dan* roles, the falsetto is soft and gentle. Young *Sheng* roles use a high pitched falsetto that is stronger than *Dan* roles, yet higher pitched than old *Sheng* roles. Performers who

specialize in the martial style of Peking Opera do not sing as much as those performers who specialize in the singing style.

iv. Makeup and costuming

One of the most recognizable elements of Peking Opera is the use of elaborate facial makeup and lavish costumes. The colors and patterns found on the faces of *Jing* and *Chou* characters indicate personality characteristics. For example, a red face indicates uprightness and loyalty, while a white face indicates treachery and cunning. Fathers and sons can have similarly patterned faces. Different patterns also identify characters as specific people, such as a monk or an outlaw. Makeup is also used to portray animals.

No performer goes on stage with a blank face, however. Although the *Jing* and *Chou* roles are singled out for their use of makeup, other characters use stage makeup to emphasize their features. For example, many *Dan* roles heavily emphasize the eyes by using red coloring and heavy eyeliner.

The costuming used in Peking Opera is also very different from European opera. Performers wear bright colors with elaborate patterns. Heavily ornamented headdresses are also common. *Jing* roles often wear false beards that reach down past their waists. These costumes serve to set the characters apart and give further clues about character traits.

v. Stage decoration

Staging in Peking Opera is different from the European style in that Peking Opera uses very few props and little scenery. For example, something as simple as a table and two chairs will represent a room. What kind of room this is depends on the location of the chair, the decoration on the tablecloth, and the thickness of the cushion. This same table

and chairs can easily become a bed or a bridge, and can also serve as a weapon. A riding crop can be used to show that an actor is riding a horse, as well as the attitude of the horse. Performers will also pantomime props, such as using an imaginary needle to stitch a shoe. This kind of simplicity and symbolism is very representative of the “less is more” theory of Peking Opera.

vi. Plots

Peking Opera plots can be divided into two types, *wen xi* and *wu xi*. *Wen xi* refers to operas about daily life, without much fighting onstage. *Wu xi* operas feature acrobatic fighting, accompanied by gongs, drums, and other percussion instruments. While European operas are often concerned with love, Peking Opera plots focus on moral lessons. A Peking Opera story often focuses on good vanquishing evil, or on people being rewarded for doing the right thing. These plots are historical in nature, yet they do not specify a specific period. In Peking Opera, the plot is secondary to the acting skills of the performers.

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Chinese Instruments



Gongs

- Bronze
- Various sizes
- Used in music as well as ceremonies



Erhu

- 2 strings
- Played by bowing between the strings



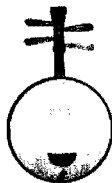
Pipa

- Pear shaped body
- Four strings



Yuequin "Moon Lute"

- Long neck
- Round body
- Scalloped soundbox
- Used primarily in Opera music



Zheng

- Wooden
- 21-25 strings, played with the fingers



Sheng

- Mouth organ
- Can produce single tones and chords
- Uses 21-32 reeds
- One of the oldest Chinese instruments



Di

- Flute
- Wooden
- Played like a western flute, but has no keys.
- Sounds birdlike



Guan

- Double reed
- Used in ensembles with sheng
- High, nasal sound



Flower Drum

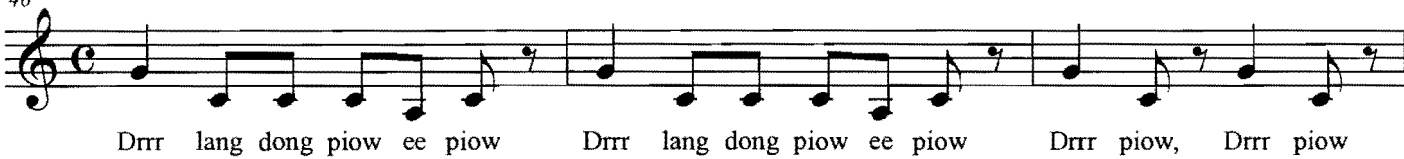
Chinese Traditional

$\text{♩} = 69$

Voice

6 Pit - y my — fate, My — sad — fate, It has not
been my luck to find a worth-y mate; Oth-ers wed rich ones, would that I were
12 they, My hus - band beats the drum and sings the live-long day. Rich-es do not
18 come to those who sing the live-long day. Drrr lang dong piow ee piow
22 Drrr lang dong piow ee piow Drrr piow Drrr piow Drrr piow drrr piow piow yoo Drrr
25 piow piow piow ee piow! Bit-ter is my life, Oh - sad - life,
30 It has not been my lot to find a pret - ty wife. Oth-ers are wed to
36 grace and beau - ty rare; My wife has such big feet each one would make a
41 pair. Meas - ure them your - self and see, each one would make a pair.

46



49

